



MISSISSIPPI EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
NEWS RELEASE
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MISSISSIPPI LAUDED IN GAO REPORT ON KATRINA RECOVERY
State's systems deemed a national model

Jackson, Mississippi – A new report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) gives Mississippi high marks in tracking and administering nearly \$3 billion received through FEMA's Public Assistance recovery program after Hurricane Katrina.

The report released this month, "Disaster Recovery: Past Experiences Offer Recovery Lessons for Hurricanes Ike and Gustav and Future Disasters," holds Mississippi up as an example of model strategies that other state, federal and local officials should consider in case of future disasters.

"I'm proud of what our state has accomplished and the recognition we received in this GAO report," Governor Haley Barbour said. "We have proven that when faced with tremendous tasks – such as recovering from the worst natural disaster in American history – Mississippians can and will develop innovative solutions.

"I appreciate what the report says. It is also important to remember that while we've made tremendous progress, we still have a long way to go to reach full recovery of the Mississippi Gulf Coast," he said.

Specifically, the March 2009 report referenced how Mississippi used Public Assistance funding to develop online accounting systems that made it easier for applicants and officials to track projects from beginning to closeout. Two Web-based payment and document management software programs were developed to manage the Public Assistance funding Mississippi received. The systems, MississippiPA.org and the Enterprise Content Management System (ECMS), effectively allow all participants to track every phase of a project from FEMA obligation of funds through the final payment process.

The systems also give FEMA and the state immediate access to key documents and a tracking system that makes the multistage application process more organized and manageable for all involved.

Mississippi is working with 911 applicants through the PA program and is administering almost 11,000 projects. The federal government has obligated \$2.9 billion for these projects, of which the state has disbursed almost \$1.7 billion.



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"Our state was able to take this extremely complicated Public Assistance program and make it more accessible, efficient and easier to use for both applicants and officials overseeing the projects," Womack said. "There are still ways to improve the process, but Hurricane Katrina presented us with a challenge that we faced head on."

The objective of FEMA's Public Assistance program is to provide assistance to State, Tribal and local governments, and certain private nonprofit organizations so that communities can quickly respond to and recover from major disasters or emergencies declared by the President. The program provides funding for the repair, replacement or restoration of disaster-damaged, publicly owned facilities.

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